

**ALL POWER
TO THE COMMUNES**

THE COMING INSURRECTION

The Invisible Committee

A point of clarification

EVERYONE AGREES. IT'S ABOUT TO EXPLODE. It is acknowledged, with a serious and self-important look, in the corridors of the Assembly, just as yesterday it was repeated in the cafés. There is a certain pleasure in calculating the risks. Already, we are presented with a detailed menu of preventive measures for securing the territory. The New Years festivities take a decisive turn – “next year there'll be no oysters, enjoy them while you can!” To prevent the celebrations from being totally eclipsed by the traditional disorder, 36,000 cops and 16 helicopters are rushed out by Alliot-Marie¹ – the same clown who, during the high school demonstrations in December, tremulously watched for the slightest sign of a Greek contamination, readying the police apparatus just in case. We can discern more clearly every day, beneath the reassuring drone, the noise of preparations for open war. It's impossible to ignore its cold and pragmatic implementation, no longer even bothering to present itself as an operation of pacification.

The newspapers conscientiously draw up the list of causes for the sudden disquiet. There is the financial crisis, of course, with its booming unemployment, its share of hopelessness and of social plans, its Kerviel and Madoff scandals. There is the failure of the educational system, its dwindling production of workers and citizens, even with the children of the middle class as its raw material. There is the existence of a youth to which no political representation corresponds, a youth good for nothing but destroying the free bicycles that society so conscientiously put at their disposal.

None of these worrisome subjects should appear insurmountable in an era whose predominant mode of government is precisely the management of crises. Unless we consider that what power is confronting is neither just another crisis, nor a series of more or less chronic problems, of more or less anticipated disturbances, but a singular peril: that a form

1. Michèle Alliot-Marie, the French Interior Minister.

of conflict, and positions, have emerged that are explicitly not *manageable*.

THOSE WHO EVERYWHERE MAKE UP THIS PERIL have to ask themselves more than the trifling questions about causes, or the probabilities of inevitable movements and confrontations. They need to ask how, for instance, does the Greek chaos resonate in the French situation? An uprising here cannot be the simple transposition of what happened over there. Global civil war still has its local specificities. In France a situation of generalized rioting would provoke an explosion of another tenor.

The Greek rioters are faced with a weak state, whilst being able to take advantage of a strong popularity. One must not forget that it was against the Regime of the Colonels that, only thirty years ago, democracy reconstituted itself on the basis of a practice of political violence. This violence, whose memory is not so distant, still seems intuitive to most Greeks. Even the leaders of the socialist party have thrown a molotov or two in their youth. Yet classical politics is equipped with variants that know very well how to accommodate these practices and to extend their ideological rubbish to the very heart of the riot. If the Greek battle wasn't decided, and put down, in the streets — the police being visibly outflanked there — it's because its neutralization was played out elsewhere. There is nothing more draining, nothing more fatal, than this classical politics, with its dried up rituals, its thinking without thought, its little closed world.

In France, our most exalted socialist bureaucrats have never been anything other than shriveled husks filling up the halls of the Assembly. Here everything conspires to annihilate even the slightest form of political intensity. Which means that it is always possible to oppose the citizen to the delinquent in a quasi-linguistic operation that goes hand in hand with quasi-military operations. The riots of November 2005 and, in a different context, the social movements in the autumn of 2007, have already provided several precedents. The image of right wing students in Nanterre applauding as the police expelled their classmates offers a small glimpse of what the future holds in store.

It goes without saying that the attachment of the French to the state — the guarantor of universal values, the last rampart against

the disaster – is a pathology that is difficult to undo. It's above all a fiction that no longer knows how to carry on. Our governors themselves increasingly consider it as a useless encumbrance because they, at least, take the conflict for what it is – *militarily*. They have no complex about sending in elite antiterrorist units to subdue riots, or to liberate a recycling center occupied by its workers. As the welfare state collapses, we see the emergence of a brute conflict between those who desire order and those who don't. Everything that French politics has been able to deactivate is in the process of unleashing itself. It will never be able to process all that it has repressed. In the advanced degree of social decomposition, we can count on the coming movement to find the necessary breath of nihilism. Which will not mean that it won't be exposed to other limits.

Revolutionary movements do not spread by contamination but by *resonance*. Something that is constituted here resonates with the shock wave emitted by something constituted over there. A body that resonates does so according to its own mode. An insurrection is not like a plague or a forest fire – a linear process which spreads from place to place after an initial spark. It rather takes the shape of a music, whose focal points, though dispersed in time and space, succeed in imposing the rhythm of their own vibrations, always taking on more density. To the point that any return to normal is no longer desirable or even imaginable.

When we speak of Empire we name the mechanisms of power that preventively and surgically stifle any revolutionary becoming in a situation. In this sense, Empire is not an enemy that confronts us head-on. It is a rhythm that imposes itself, a way of dispensing and dispersing reality. Less an order of the world than its sad, heavy and militaristic liquidation.

What we mean by the party of insurgents is the sketching out of a completely other *composition*, an other side of reality, which from Greece to the French *banlieues*² is seeking its consistency.

It is now publicly understood that crisis situations are so many opportunities for the restructuring of domination. This is why SARKOZY CAN ANNOUNCE, WITHOUT SEEMING TO LIE too much, that the financial crisis is “the end of a world,” and that 2009 will see France enter a new era. This charade of an economic crisis is

2. *banlieue* – French ghettos, usually located in the suburban periphery.

supposed to be a novelty: we are supposed to be in the dawn of a new epoch where we will all join together in fighting inequality and global warming. But for our generation — which was born in the crisis and has known nothing but economic, financial, social and ecological crisis — this is rather difficult to accept. They won't fool us again, with another round “now we start all over again” and “it's just a question of tightening our belts for a little while.” To tell the truth, the disastrous unemployment figures no longer provoke any feeling in us. Crisis is a means of governing. In a world that seems to hold together only through the infinite management of its own collapse.

What this war is being fought over is not various ways of managing society, but irreducible and irreconcilable ideas of happiness and their worlds. We know it, and so do the powers that be. The militant remnants that see us — always more numerous, always more identifiable — are tearing out their hair trying to fit us into little compartments in their little heads. They hold out their arms to us in order to better suffocate us, with their failures, their paralysis, their stupid problematics. From elections to “transitions,” militants will never be anything other than that which distances us, each time a little farther, from the possibility of communism. Luckily we will accommodate neither treason nor deception for much longer.

The past has given us much too many bad answers for us not to see that the mistakes were in the questions themselves. There is no need to choose between the fetishism of spontaneity and organizational control; between the “come one, come all” of activist networks and the discipline of hierarchy; between acting desperately now and waiting desperately for later; between bracketing that which is to be lived and experimented in the name of a paradise that seems more and more like a hell the longer it is put off and flogging the dead horse of how planting carrots is enough to leave this nightmare.

Organizations are obstacles to organizing ourselves.

In truth, there is no gap between what we are, what we do, and what we are becoming. Organizations — political or labor, fascist or anarchist — always begin by separating, practically, these aspects of existence. It's then easy for them to present their idiotic formalism as the sole remedy to this separation. To organize is not to give a structure to weakness. It is above all to form bonds — bonds that are by no means neutral — terrible bonds. The degree

of organization is measured by the intensity of sharing – material *and* spiritual.

From now on, to materially organize for survival is to materially organize for attack. Everywhere, a new idea of communism is to be elaborated. In the shadows of bar rooms, in print shops, squats, farms, occupied gymnasiums, new complicities are to be born. These precious connivances must not be refused the necessary means for the deployment of their forces.

Here lies the truly revolutionary potentiality of the present. The increasingly frequent skirmishes have this formidable quality: that they are always an occasion for complicities of this type, sometimes ephemeral, but sometimes also unbetrayable. When a few thousand young people find the determination to assail this world, you'd have to be as stupid as a cop to seek out a financial trail, a leader, or a snitch.

TWO CENTURIES OF CAPITALISM AND MARKET NIHILISM have brought us to the most extreme alienations – from our selves, from others, from worlds. The fiction of the individual has decomposed at the same speed that it was becoming real. Children of the metropolis, we offer this wager: that it's in the most profound deprivation of existence, perpetually stifled, perpetually conjured away, that the possibility of communism resides.

When all is said and done, it's with an entire anthropology that we are at war. With the very idea of man.

Communism then, as presupposition *and* as experiment. Sharing of a sensibility *and* elaboration of sharing. The uncovering of what is common *and* the building of a force. Communism as the matrix of a meticulous, audacious assault on domination. As a call and as a name for all worlds resisting imperial pacification, all solidarities irreducible to the reign of commodities, all friendships assuming the necessities of war. COMMUNISM. We know it's a term to be used with caution. Not because, in the great parade of words, it may no longer be very fashionable. But because our worst enemies have used it, and continue to do so. We insist. Certain words are like battlegrounds: their meaning, revolutionary or reactionary, is a victory, to be torn from the jaws of struggle.

Deserting classical politics means facing up to war, which is

also situated on the terrain of language. Or rather, in the way that words, gestures and life are inseparably linked. If one puts so much effort into imprisoning as terrorists a few young communists who are supposed to have participated in publishing *The Coming Insurrection*, it is not because of a “thought crime”, but rather because they might embody a certain consistency between acts and thought. Something which is rarely treated with leniency.

What these people are accused of is not to have written a book, nor even to have physically attacked the sacrosanct flows that irrigate the metropolis. It’s that they might possibly have confronted these flows with the density of a political thought and position. That an act could have made sense according to another consistency of the world than the deserted one of Empire. Anti-terrorism claims to attack the possible future of a “criminal association.” But what is really being attacked is the future of the situation. The possibility that behind every grocer a few bad intentions are hiding, and behind every thought, the acts that it calls for. The possibility expressed by an idea of politics – anonymous but welcoming, disseminate and uncontrollable – which cannot be relegated to the storeroom of freedom of expression.

There remains scarcely any doubt that youth will be the first to savagely confront power. These last few years, from the riots of Spring 2001 in Algeria to those of December 2008 in Greece, are nothing but a series of warning signs in this regard. Those who 30 or 40 years ago revolted against their parents will not hesitate to reduce this to a conflict between generations, if not to a predictable symptom of adolescence.

The only future of a “generation” is to be the preceding one, on a route that leads inevitably to the cemetery.

Tradition would have it that everything begins with a “social movement.” Especially at a moment when the left, which has still not finished decomposing, hypocritically tries to regain its credibility in the streets. Except that in the streets it no longer has a monopoly. Just look at how, with each new mobilization of high school students – as with everything the left still dares to support – a rift continually widens between their whining demands and the level of violence and determination of the movement.

From this rift we must build a trench.

If we see a succession of movements hurrying one after the

other, without leaving anything visible behind them, it must nonetheless be admitted that something persists. A powder trail links what in each event has not let itself be captured by the absurd temporality of the withdrawal of a new law, or some other pretext. In fits and starts, and in its own rhythm, we are seeing something like a force take shape. A force that does not serve its time but imposes it, silently.

It is no longer a matter of foretelling the collapse or depicting the possibilities of joy. Whether it comes sooner or later, the point is to prepare for it. It's not a question of providing a schema for what an insurrection should be, but of taking the possibility of an uprising for what it never should have ceased being; a vital impulse of youth as much as a popular wisdom. If one knows how to move, the absence of a schema is not an obstacle but an opportunity. For the insurgents, it is the sole space that can guarantee the essential: keeping the initiative. What remains to be created, to be tended as one tends a fire, is a certain outlook, a certain tactical fever, which once it has emerged, even now, reveals itself as determinant — and a constant source of determination. Already certain questions have been revived that only yesterday may have seemed grotesque or outmoded; they need to be seized upon, not in order to respond to them definitively, but to make them live. Having posed them anew is not the least of the Greek uprising's virtues:

How does a situation of generalized rioting become an insurrectionary situation? What to do once the streets have been taken, once the police have been soundly defeated there? Do the parliaments still deserve to be attacked? What is the practical meaning of deposing power locally? How to decide? How to *subsist*?

HOW TO FIND EACH OTHER?

—Invisible Committee, January 2009

THE COMING INSURRECTION

FROM WHATEVER ANGLE you approach it, the present offers no way out. This is not the least of its virtues. From those who seek hope above all, it tears away every firm ground. Those who claim to have solutions are contradicted almost immediately. Everyone agrees that things can only get worse. “The future has no future” is the wisdom of an age that, for all its appearance of perfect normalcy, has reached the level of consciousness of the first punks.

The sphere of political representation has come to a close. From left to right, it's the same nothingness striking the pose of an emperor or a savior, the same sales assistants adjusting their discourse according to the findings of the latest surveys. Those who still vote seem to have no other intention than to desecrate the ballot box by voting as a pure act of protest. We're beginning to suspect that it's only *against voting itself* that people continue to vote. Nothing we're being shown is adequate to the situation, not by far. In its very silence, the populace seems infinitely more mature than all these puppets bickering amongst themselves about how to govern it. The ramblings of any Belleville *chibani*¹

1. *Chibani* is Arabic for old man, here referring to the old men who play backgammon in the cafes of Belleville, a largely immigrant neighborhood in Paris.